



AFTER

Michigan Is Where **CARTER'S** HEART IS

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BY DIANNA STAMPLER
PHOTOS COURTESY OF HGTV

idly recognized as a prominent fixture on the HGTV and TLC networks, remodeling- and design-icon Carter Oosterhouse is even more at home in Traverse City – where he

was born and raised...and where his heart remains.

This love affair with his hometown is evident. Over the years, Carter has brought the crew from his show *Carter Can* to Northern Michigan to take on various home improvement projects. In 2008, the Oosterhouse family banded together to tackle the “secret” remodel of the 1960s-era Traverse City Firehall #2. The project cost an estimated \$130,000 and was said to be real morale booster for the 27-person department.

During that same time period, the family and crew took on a second project – a complete remodel of the East Bay Township ranch home of Susan Campbell. A retired children’s mental health agent, Campbell is the single mother of five – including two with severe special needs – and the guardian of a sixth, also with special needs.

These two projects were unveiled to national audiences during a one-hour *Carter Comes Home* special, which aired the day after Thanksgiving, 2009.



BEFORE

Bitten by the Northern Michigan bug, they returned to Traverse City the next year, tackling two new homes featured on shows that aired earlier in 2010 (Episode 401 – the O’Connors – aired June 27; Episode 402 – the Silers – aired April 9).

This past summer, through the Carter’s Kids program, a family playground was constructed in Greilickville Harbor Park in Elmwood Township, along the shore of West Grand Traverse Bay. It was dedi-

cated on a sweltering and steamy summer day in August. Carter, who is often seen walking and driving around Traverse City, never denied an opportunity for a fan to say hello, shake his hand or pose for a picture – his hometown pride proudly stretching across his smiling face.

“I never thought I’d build a playground in Traverse City, but it just worked out,” Carter says. “This was a fantastic park back in the day and now it is once again a great looking park for families to enjoy.”

The Carter’s Kids program works to fight childhood obesity by promoting healthy activities and habits, through the development and building of community parks and playgrounds – often in low-income areas. Around the country, Carter and his charity have built 20 playgrounds so far – including the one in Traverse City, with another half-dozen on the books.

“We’re hoping to get to the point where we’re building one a month,” says Carter.

Born September 19, 1976 in Traverse City, Carter Nicholas Oosterhouse is the youngest of four children born to Mary and Roland Oosterhouse. In this large family, values such as a strong work ethic, nutrition and eco-friendly practices (before they became all the rage) were part of their daily lives. They were always on the go, always out doing something and that lifestyle still holds true for Carter, who always has something in the works – whether that’s a television show, a home improvement project or a charitable activity.

Introduced to carpentry at the age of 11, Carter worked in construction on and off throughout high school and college. It’s almost like a family tradition – being architectural creators. His two brothers – Todd and Tyler – are contractors, while his sister, Sienna, and his sister-in-law, Erin (wife of Tyler), are both interior designers.

With a Bachelor of Arts in nutrition and communication from Central Michigan University, the 33-year-old Carter moved to California after graduation to pursue a modeling and acting career and soon found himself at home on the TLC show *Trading Spaces*. From there, it was on to HGTV with *Carter Can*, and *Red Hot and Green*. A new, unidentified series – which began shooting in September, will debut in early 2011.

Carter has become a go-to expert for many national outlets including: Rachael Ray, *The Today Show*, *The CBS Early Show*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *The View*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Extra*, *USA Today* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

The 6’2” Carter was even voted *People* magazine’s “Sexiest Man on TV” in 2003 and has graced the cover of many other publications including *TV Guide*, *Star*, *US Weekly*, *Organic Style* and *USA Today*.

Carter has recently teamed up with the Council for Responsible Energy to help homeowners better understand the importance of making better energy choices—both in and out of the home. “In today’s

economy everyone is trying to save money,” said Carter. “Sustainable building practices continue to grow so it only makes sense for homeowners to build or upgrade their homes with certain green features that are both eco-friendly and more cost-effective in the long run. Nearly

all of the homeowners I speak with want to live in a more eco-friendly way but most of them don’t know how. They don’t think about energy everyday because it’s not something they can see or touch which is why education, awareness and understanding are vital.”

These days, Carter divides his time between his west coast home in Hermosa Beach, Calif., – a streamlined, modern and contemporary home located just a block off the beach – and Traverse City, where his 100-year-old Victorian-style farmhouse sits on Old Mission Peninsula, just north of Traverse City.

He says without hesitation, that one day he’ll return home to raise a family and grow old. For now, he uses the remodeled home – with its expansive open-concept kitchen – as a place to escape with family and friends and dream of what the future may bring.

Dreams like planting a vineyard and opening a winery in the heart of Northern Michigan award-winning wine country. This summer, Carter and his brother, Todd, took the first steps to make that dream a reality.

“I own 13 acres and just got another 40 acres adjacent to my property,” Carter said in an August interview with Sandra Silfven, wine columnist for the *Detroit News*. “We have planted six acres so far, right next to Chateau Grand Traverse.”

The Peninsula is home to a close-knit community of vintners, with many of the current winemakers growing about the same time. Now, they’re working together to make an agricultural and economic impact by expanding and contributing to the area’s nationally-recognized region.

“I am huge on the Michigan economy,” Carter continued in his interview with Silfven. “I want it to make a comeback and I want to do something to benefit it.”

Carter says they’ll plant another 14 acres in the spring of 2011, and the eco-friendly tasting room will follow. No word yet on who will be charged with crafting the wine at this yet-to-be-named vineyard / winery operation. One thing is certain – with Carter’s inspiration and determination, it’s sure to be a popular addition to the Old Mission wine trail and Michigan’s growing wine scene.

For more about Carter Oosterhouse, visit www.carteroosterhouse.com. □



PHOTO BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

Dianna Stampfler is a dedicated promoter of all things Michigan, as well as being a dedicated viewer of HGTV.